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Louise Radman samples a GSM.

Perfect blend

Louise Radman uncovers GSM's X factor

GSM is the hottest acronym for winter. A blend of three grapes – grenache, shiraz and mourvedre – it's irresistibly supple and sexy, plus approachable and immediately drinkable. Top-quality drops show alluring spice, long, red berry flavour and beautiful balance, while cellaring will give complexity and depth.

This style is usually dominated by grenache or shiraz, but there is no magic recipe. Grenache softens the blend and gives succulent strawberry and perfumed lift with spicy cedar as it ages; shiraz lends powerful palate weight, colour and blackberry backbone; and known as matoaro in the Barossa and monastrell in Spain, mourvedre acts like garlic – a flavour enhancer. It gives structure, tar and spice.

The global benchmark for GSM hails from Châteauneuf-du-Pape in the Rhone Valley region of southern France – look for wines from labels such as Guigal and Chapoutier.

Closer to home, the Barossa and McLaren Vale have some of the oldest shiraz and grenache vineyards in the world, so rate on the GSM scene. From McLaren Vale, look to d'Arenberg, which has long been leading the pack, and new-wave producers such as Cascabel. With GSM a traditional Barossa Valley blend, wineries such as Torbreck, Henschke and Spinifex make sophisticated, Rhone-inspired styles.

And what does the future hold for our GSM? Barossa winemaker Rick Burge says plenty: "People are... combining the varieties like an artist or chef to make a masterpiece of many inspired elements and layers." Cheers!

VINO Louise's top picks



2006 Kaesler Avignon GSM, Barossa Valley, \$30 The Barossa boys say this is their purest Avignon to date. It is a fine example – musky fragrance with a fleshy palate and core of acidity to balance its 16 per cent alcohol content. A complex savoury style, great with winter game. Also try their top-value Stonehorse GSM, \$18.

2006 Burge Family Winemakers Olive Hill GSM, Barossa Valley, \$32

A consistently reliable expression of terroir from clay- and limestone-rich Olive Hill vineyard. Shiraz dominates alongside character laden, old-vine grenache. Layers of blackberry, cinnamon and tar with subtle vanilla notes from maturation in French oak barriques.



2006 Te-Aro Estate Two Charlies GSM, Barossa Valley, \$20 Equal parts of dry-grown grenache, old-vine shiraz and 14 per cent mourvedre from the winery home block planted by great-grandfather Charlie Fromm in 1919. Black jellies, licorice drops and delicious floral confection from the cool southern end of the Barossa around Williamstown.

